

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 08367 010340Z
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S E C R E T CANBERRA 8367

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE FROM AMBASSADOR ALSTON

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: XO, EAGR
SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON INDIAN OCEAN; INFORMATION ON 1977 MEAT
IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: STATE 283804

1. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL OCCASIONS RECENTLY WHERE I
FEAR WE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN INFORMED IN A TIMELY FASHION
OF EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN WASHINGTON OF GREAT IMPORTANCE
TO AUSTRALIA. ONE IS THE INDIAN OCEAN TALKS, WHERE WE
HAVE YET TO RECEIVE A RUNDOWN OF THE GELBARENOUF MEETING
ON NOVEMBER 21.

2. THE SECOND EXAMPLE CONCERNS A SUBJECT WHICH IS
EXTREMELY SENSITIVE IN AUSTRALIA, ESPECIALLY IN A PRE-
ELECTION PERIOD: IT CONCERNS THE 1977 U.S. MEAT IMPORT
PROGRAM AND SHORTFALL REALLOCATION. REFTEL WAS THE
FIRST NOTIFICATION WE HAD THAT A 15.9 MILLION POUNDS
SHORTFALL IN BEEF HAD BEEN REALLOCATED TO FIVE CENTRAL
AMERICAN COUNTRIES. THE CABLE STATES THAT "SEVERAL
NON-SHORTFALLING PARTICIPANTS AGREED TO FOREGO THEIR
SHARE OF THE REALLOCATION..." I QUESTION IF AUSTRALIA

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CANBER 08367 010340Z

WAS CONSULTED ON THIS AND IF AUSTRALIA WAS ONE OF THE
NATIONS WHICH AGREED TO WAIVE ITS SHORTFALL REALLOCATION,
PERHAPS IN LIGHT OF AUSTRALIA'S OWN BEEF SUPPLY SITUATION?

3. THE BEEF INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA IS IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTY
AND THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IS UNDER ATTACK FROM ITS
TRADITIONAL SUPPORTERS IN RURAL AREAS IN WHAT SHAPES UP

TO BE A CLOSE FEDERAL ELECTION. THE ALP COULD USE AUSTRALIA'S FAILURE TO BENEFIT FROM THIS YEAR'S SHORTFALL (AUSTRALIA HAS PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED SHORTFALL REALLOCATIONS) TO CLAIM: (1) THAT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT'S "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE U.S. IS A MYTH, AND (2) THAT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO PROTECT AUSTRALIAN RURAL INTERESTS.

4. PM FRASER AND THE L/NCP COALITION GOVERNMENT HAVE CONSTANTLY REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP THEY HAVE WITH THE U.S. WE HAVE CONSTANTLY REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIAN BEEF EXPORTS TO THE AUSTRALIAN BEEF INDUSTRY. I WOULD APPRECIATE A FULLER RUNDOWN ON THE SHORTFALL REALLOCATION SO WE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO LIMIT ANY EVENTUAL POLITICAL FALLOUT DETRIMENTAL TO THE L/NCP, AND, OF COURSE, TO U.S. INTERESTS. ALSTON

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